


Browning Miss Orville

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Artists of Abraham Lincoln portraits

Eliza Caldwell Browning

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Crayon Drawing Reveals Light-Hearted Lincoln

A different facet of Abraham Lincoln, that of a youthful (26) and pleasant looking story-teller, is revealed in this story from Lee Somers, 301 E. Healey.

The picture was a crayon drawing by Mrs. Orville Browning, then of Vandalia, who wished to show a smoother-faced, lighter-hearted Lincoln than the more familiar one showing the Great Emancipator bowed down by the cares of state.

Accurate details of the circumstances are lacking, Somers admits, but the picture is definite proof of the fact Lincoln had his happier moments.

Mrs. Browning is reputed to have made the drawing while she listened to the delightful stories of her subject.

Mr. Somers writes:

Some Story Gaps

A story carried forward by word of mouth usually retains the basic truths but tends to become inaccurate in its details. There are some gaps in this story and some of the details may be inaccurate. But, we feel very confident this picture is a reproduction of the long lost Lincoln the Story Teller.

When the 25-year old Abraham Lincoln was elected to the Illinois State Legislature in 1834 he realized he would need to be better dressed and better groomed than he had been before. So he borrowed money from his friend, Coleman Smoot of New Salem, and went to Springfield to buy the first complete wardrobe he had ever known. He also began to patronize the barbers.

In Vandalia, Mr. Lincoln renewed a friendship of Black Hawk War days with Orville H. Browning of Quincy in Adams County. A little later when Mr. Browning married and brought his bride with him to Vandalia, Mr. Lincoln and the Brownings became frequent companions.

Mrs. Browning, who had considerable artistic ability, was delighted with Mr. Lincoln's stories. She would ask him to tell them another story. While Mr. Lincoln was telling stories Mrs. Browning made a crayon drawing of him and named it Lincoln the Story Teller.

The Brownings returned to their home in Quincy and after several years Mr. Browning was elected to the United States Senate. When the Brownings moved to Washington, D.C., a John Read, possibly Reed or Reid, of Quincy came into possession of the drawing.

Loaned To Medill

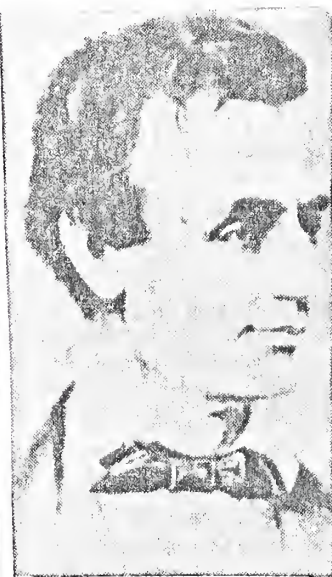
In 1854, Abraham Lincoln, Orville Browning, John Read and many others took part in organizing the Republican party in Illinois. In 1860 Abraham Lincoln became its presidential nominee. Then John Read loaned the drawing to a Mr. Medill of Chicago. Mr. Medill had a lithograph made of it. The lithograph was used during the 1860 campaign. No doubt this was Joseph Medill, editor of the Chicago Tribune.

Several photographs of Mr. Lincoln were taken during the se-

ries of Lincoln - Douglas debates in the fall of 1858. Other photographs and several drawings and paintings were made after Mr. Lincoln became the Republican nominee in 1860. Most of these show Mr. Lincoln's face to be quite deeply lined and he appears heavily burdened with care.

A son of John Read had either the original or a copy of it in his law office in Lewistown for some time after the war between the states. Here the trail ends. Not only was the picture lost but, except for a very few, the story was unknown. How or when it was brought to the old pioneer museum in Kentucky where we found it in October 1956, is unknown. It had been there for a very long time.

We have since learned of another copy of this picture in a private collection in Indiana. This copy bears the inscription, "Lincoln at 26 years of age".



THE STORYTELLER
... Abe's lighter moments

Brown (Mrs. Davis)

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